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Up, Up Jesus! Down, Down Satan! African Religiosity in the former Soviet Bloc — the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations

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Abstract

African religions are increasingly engaging the diaspora as new abodes and promising 'mission fields' particularly in the last decades. At least two genres of Christian movements can be clearly mapped: those existing as branches of mother churches headquartered in Africa; and those founded by new African immigrants with headquarters in diaspora, from where they are expanding within and back to Africa and elsewhere. The paper deals with an example of the second category, the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations founded in Ukraine by Nigerian-born Sunday Adelaja. While virtually all new African churches in diaspora seem to be dominated by African immigrants, the 'Embassy of God' is an exception with a non-African membership majority. We map its demography and social-ethnic composition, and examine to what extent their belief and ritual system appeal to a population that was until recently home to essentially communist ideas and worldview. We explore how the church is gradually inserting itself in new geo-cultural contexts as well as reconfiguring public roles. It shows how the leader's complex peregrinations demonstrate one instance of religious transnationalization of African churches in diaspora.

Keywords

African churches, transnationalization, diaspora, migration, reverse mission

Introduction

Until very recently,¹ the huge repertoire of new African religious communities that have furthered their insertion and assertion in Europe, the Americas and

¹ The first draft of this paper was presented at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, USA, November 19, 2005. My appreciation goes to the University of Edinburgh Divinity School for part-funding my participation at this conference.

other parts of the globe as new abodes and promising 'mission fields' have been largely neglected in the burgeoning literature on contemporary immigrant religiosity in these contexts.² New African immigrants have shaped and swelled global migration flows through chain migration, family reunion, labour drives and employment preferences, refugees or asylees. Zeleza vividly demonstrates how the dynamics and directions of global mobility, and African participation in international migration, particularly in Western Europe and North America, has become more pronounced, notwithstanding the imposition of stringent immigration controls by these countries.³ In the face of this increasing immigration trend, Europe and North America in particular are also experiencing a concomitant proliferation of new migrant religious communities. At least two genres of new African Christianity that have burgeoned especially in the last two decades can be clearly mapped: those existing as branches of mother churches headquartered in Africa; and those founded by new African immigrants with headquarters in diaspora, from where they are expanding within and back to Africa. The paper deals with an example of the latter rubric, the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations (referred henceforth in this paper as 'the Embassy') founded in Ukraine by the Nigerian-born Sunday Adelaja. 'The Embassy' with a non-African membership majority becomes an exception in contrast to virtually all new African churches in diaspora that are dominated by African immigrants. The paper examines to what extent their beliefs and rituals appeal to a population that was until recently home to essentially communist ideas and worldview. It demonstrates through their acquisition of properties and real estate, how the church is gradually inserting itself in new geo-cultural contexts; reconfiguring their religious and public roles in Eastern Europe. It shows how the leader's complex peregrinations and itinerancy demonstrate one instance of religious transnationalization of African churches in diaspora.

Mapping African Diaspora in Former Soviet Spaces

The trans-cultural encounter and exchange between Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Arab world has a long history that predates the 15th century and

² See Appendix 1.

³ P. T. Zeleza, 'Contemporary African Migrations in a Global Context', *African Issues* 30/1 (2002), 13.

the era of obnoxious human trafficking.⁴ Contacts between Europe and Africa in particular were constant throughout Europe's Antiquity, Middle Ages and the so-called Modern Age.⁵ European presence and interest in Africa through these periods have been largely mixed and split along the contours of commerce, politics and religion. The imperial expansionist agenda generated new situations, circumstances and posed as a catalyst towards diaspora formation. One of the inherent consequences of these exploits and distension was that it later created several situations that brought Africans at varied times to other continental shores such as of Europe and the New World, thus also resulting in the formation of enclaves and communities. African diaspora has come to represent one theoretical construct in describing this global dispersal of indigenous African populations at different phases of world history. By employing 'Black Atlantic' Gilroy⁶ contextualizes the voluntary and involuntary migration of Africans to Europe, Latin America and North America since the Age of Discovery. The breadth of African diaspora even transcends the popular geographical fixation to Europe and the New World and includes the Mediterranean, Arab worlds, the former Soviet Union as well as the cross-migration within the African shore itself.

In an illuminating article *African Presence in Former Soviet Spaces*, Fikes and Lemon⁷ draw attention in their review to inherent difficulties in representing African presence in former Soviet geo-political spaces. As they remarked,

To identify an African diaspora in the territories of the former USSR is a curious task. African presence outside of the contexts of slavery, or in spaces beyond transatlantic slave routes, has been a rare topic of diasporic inquiry. Research on African diasporic populations has centred on the transatlantic experience, with the exception of a limited number of works that attend to trans-Saharan and Ottoman slavery.⁸

This review tracks and analyses existing literature (in English) about African presence in the former USSR and was intended to shift our scholarly gaze to spaces not conventionally considered within reach of African diaspora. Explo-

⁴ Adogame, 'African Christian Communities in Diaspora', 494.

⁵ H. W. Debrunner, *Presence and Prestige: Africans in Europe. A History of Africans in Europe before 1918*, Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien 1997.

⁶ P. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Boston: Harvard University Press 1993.

⁷ K. Fikes and A. Lemon, 'African Presence in Former Soviet Spaces', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31 (2002).

⁸ See Fikes and Lemon, 497.

ration, slave trade, colonialism, poverty, cultural exchange and ecological disasters all contributed to an African diaspora that has scattered Africans to Europe, the Americas and elsewhere. The emergence of enclaves and communities can be pinned down to the different waves of emigration. The earliest strata aggregated young, virile, able-bodied Africans mopped up in the obnoxious web of human trafficking and catapulted involuntarily to various metropolises in Europe, the Americas, and the Mediterranean, Arab and Soviet geo-spaces. The fortunate survivors of this excruciating ordeal, their descendants, and slave remnants in the post-19th century abolition scheme constituted the first African diaspora enclaves. Migrations linking the Sahara to the Caucasus, such as those connected with Ottoman colonization and slave trafficking, suggest that African-identified populations reside in the territories formerly occupied by the Soviet Union.⁹ Ottoman slave trafficking, as Fikes and Lemon pointed out, 'affected not only the entire geography of Africa but also channeled slaves to and from Eastern Europe and the Balkans, as well as to and from parts of the Caucasus contested by the Russian Empire'.¹⁰ Thus, frequent population movements linked the Russian and Ottoman Empires and marked Soviet and post-Soviet states.

The spaces of the former USSR have been traversed by numerous mobile and settling populations, and many of its spaces and institutions were connected and severed by competing imperial regimes, including Mongol, Ottoman, Persian, Russian, Chinese, British, and Soviet governments.¹¹

The article was largely successful in stressing the changing ways that people recognize bodies and populations as black and/or African. The dearth of literature on African presence in former Soviet spaces wells up a pertinent question by Fikes and Lemon. They retorted: How is it that formerly enslaved, African populations that settled within these former Soviet spaces were never accorded territorial identities, while other formerly enslaved, likewise mobile — but 'non-African' — populations were?¹² As they further enthused, 'Most accounts of how Africans appeared in Russia and the Caucasus stress their non-indigenous status and rely on reports of the slave trade — enmeshed

⁹ Fikes and Lemon, 497.

¹⁰ Fikes and Lemon, 498.

¹¹ Fikes and Lemon, 499-500.

¹² Fikes and Lemon, 500.

as it was with military and diplomatic relations between Russia, Turkey, Western European nations, and the United States. Christian and Muslim slave records position African slaves in the Crimea, the Ukraine, northern Iran, and near Montenegro both in groups and as individual workers, freed and enslaved'.¹³ Blakely documents the use of small numbers of young black servants 18th century Tsarist courts, imported from places as distant as Ethiopia and Holland as slaves 'given personal freedom in exchange for a lifetime service obligation'.¹⁴

Fikes and Lemon also remark that not all accounts of African presence in the Caucasus trace it to the slave trade. According to English, African communities in Abkhazia span a period beginning before the 5th century BC.¹⁵ This shows that decades-long agitation for overseas colonies as settlement areas, sources of raw materials, and markets for the manufactured goods preceded the colonial politics of the 1880s and the subsequent bisecting of Africa. However, physical contact between Africa, the West and the former Soviet bloc increased in frequency in the 19th century, thus producing a second coterie of African diaspora. A new wave of immigrants swelled as a consequence of the Berlin-Congo 1884/1885 Conference's official partition of the African continent into spheres of artificial geographical zones of European influence, exploitation and expropriation. The Inter-war years (1914-1945) and its aftermath also experienced a reasonable degree of demographic shifts within and beyond Africa. Debrunner notes that Africans present in Europe before 1918 were always numerically few, but their very presence and the prestige they enjoyed or suffered makes an interesting tale, often a story of adaptation and survival of individuals trying to find their own identity between Africa and Europe.¹⁶ In our view, this apt observation encapsulates the experiences of Africans in the former Soviet spaces as well. 'Accounts of African students, permanent resident African-American Soviets, and Soviet-born per-

¹³ Cf. I. Schneider, 'A Negro Citizen of Soviet Georgia', *Soviet Russia Today* 10/10 (1942), 24-26; P. English, 'Cushites, Colchians, and Khazars', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 18 (1959), 49-53; L. Golden-Hanga, *Africans in Russia*. Moscow: Novosti Press Agency 1966; S. Tynes, 'When did Africans get to the Soviet Union?', *Afro-American* 30 (1973), 2; A. Blakely, *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian History and Thought*. Washington DC: Howard University Press 1986; Y. Khanga, *Soul to Soul: A Black Russian American Family, 1865-1992*. translated by S. Jacoby, New York: Norton 1992.

¹⁴ Blakely, 15.

¹⁵ English 1959.

¹⁶ Debrunner, 7.

sons of 'mixed-nationality' partnerships provide countless stories suggesting that opportunities for economic and spatial mobility were, despite policies that officially erased racial categories, aggressively racialized'.¹⁷

Fikes and Lemon note that Blakely's work¹⁸ fall outside the canonical accounts of transatlantic diaspora by attending to Russian and Soviet spaces.¹⁹ They remark that Blakely briefly recounts both Abkhazian-African origin narratives but more elaborately describes the voluntary, individual resettlements of African-Americans and Caribbeans to imperial Russia in the late 19th century and to the USSR in the 20th century. Fikes and Lemon disclose that demographic information on black residents and black Soviets from the early Soviet period into the 1990s is difficult to assess, especially because no such category as 'Negro' appears in the Soviet census or official records. They came to the USSR for varying reasons and under differing class and political circumstances. Khanga estimated 5000 to 10,000 'native black citizens and 40,000 African students in the former USSR'.²⁰ Fikes and Lemon indicate that scattered press mention accounts of 1990s movements of black-African workers and asylum seekers from various African nations, in addition to black scholars, activists, artists, state officials, and professional elite athletes from across the globe.²¹

An unprecedented upsurge, especially in the last decades, in the number of African immigrants into Europe, North America and elsewhere heralds a new phase in the history of African diaspora.²² Remarkable changes are evident in the composition and direction of international migration, features that makes contemporary migration different from the historical African diaspora in several respects. Hitherto, African migration to Europe had followed the historical, linguistic trails of colonialism with Great Britain and France as preferred

¹⁷ Fikes & Lemon, 503. Works by E. Mulekezi, 'I was a "student" at Moscow State', *Readers Digest*, (July 1961), 99-104; W. Davis, 'How Negros live in Russia', *Ebony* 15 (1960), 65-73; R. Robinson and J. Slevin, *Black on Red: My 44 years Inside the Soviet Union*, Washington DC: Acropolis 1988; Khanga 1992 and Blakely 1986 detail black experiences of racial isolation and misery in the USSR.

¹⁸ Blakely 1986.

¹⁹ Fikes and Lemon, 502.

²⁰ Khanga, 2.

²¹ Fikes and Lemon, 502.

²² See Zeleza, 9-14. He cautions that although the number of international migrants has grown significantly in absolute numbers since the 1960s, the percentage of people who have left and remained outside their countries of origin has been remarkably steady and small.

destination of migrants. In more recent times, African migration has assumed a more diffused dimension with immigrants from several African countries flocking to countries with which they had no colonial ties, mainly in western, continental Europe. This trend was thus marked by increasing diversification, in both the number of countries sending and receiving the immigrants. The dynamics and directions of global mobility, and African participation in international migration, particularly in Western Europe have become more pronounced, notwithstanding the imposition of stringent immigration controls by these countries. The adoption of restrictive immigration policies and the EU harmonization policy has partially impeded the flow of legal immigration and asylum flows but also indirectly transformed illegal immigration. The emergence of a 'fortress' Europe has in fact made African immigrants to look elsewhere such as Eastern Europe, as temporary abodes, transitory spaces and alternative routes from which they can launch into Western, Continental Europe, North America and other parts of the world.

Sacralizing Immigrant Narratives: Go to a Land that I Will Show You!

In 1993, the Nigerian-born Sunday Adelaja founded the Embassy of God Church in Kiev, Ukraine. It represents a typical example of how African churches have shifted their religious domain and centres of spiritual gravity from Continental Europe to Eastern Europe (former USSR). While most new African churches in diaspora are led and dominated by African immigrants, the Embassy is one exceptional church in Europe, and perhaps within the new African diaspora that boast of a majority non-African membership. More than half of the total membership are Ukrainians, Russians.²³ The indigenous Eastern European population that characterises its demography turned Adelaja into a religious icon.²⁴ Sunday Adelaja assumes a charismatic figure, particularly among his followers and admirers in Ukraine and beyond. His mastery of the Russian language and its employment in preaching at church services and other religious programmes has endeared him to the local audience. He taps ostensibly on the sensitive foreigner, racial chord to validate and legitimize his claim to a divine mission, but also his charisma and influence. As he affirms,

²³ Adogame, 'Contesting the Ambivalences of Modernity', 28; 'African Christian Communities in Diaspora', 504; 'Raising Champions, Taking Territories', 21.

²⁴ K. Asamoah-Gyadu, 'African Initiated Christianity in Eastern Europe: Church of the "Embassy of God" in Ukraine', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30/2 (2006), 73.

‘Though I am a foreigner, God has given me the ability to go and minister beyond race, culture, and denominational barriers’²⁵

Adelaja was raised as a Presbyterian in Ogun State of Nigeria. In 1986, at the age of 19, he claimed to have been ‘born again’ while watching Pastor William Kumuyi²⁶ on local television. Adelaja’s quest for further studies and his eventual sojourn in the former Soviet bloc is an interesting dynamic of how migration narratives are often sacralized and weaved as occurrences and mobility anchored on divine design rather than by any mundane accident. Testimony genres of several African immigrants are rife with accounts of how they saw the mysterious ‘hand of God’ in shaping their life trajectories and migration histories. Such reconstructed tropes are also often choreographed by irregular, undocumented migrants in a way that may oblique and demystify the illegalities, travails and excruciating ordeals that sometime characterize decisions to travel, the harrowing experiences during the actual journey(s) through the ‘wilderness’, ship-boat-zodiac wrecks, unanticipated deaths, and the uncertainties that hover around their sojourn in the ‘new, temporary home’.

Adelaja left his home country, Nigeria in 1986 to study journalism at Belarus State University, Minsk in the former Soviet Union. Much later in his life he situated this initial move, he described as ‘the point of exodus’, as a divine call by God. He recounts what appears to be a common trajectory in the narratives of many African Christians in diaspora:

He (God) directed me to go to Russia in a way reminiscent of the call He gave to Abraham: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you” (Gen. 12: 1). Even though I was a new believer, I had the faith to accept this as God’s sovereign assignment for my future destiny. Later I realized that this was actually my missionary call; just as God called Paul on the Damascus road, so He was calling me. However, He did not reveal it to me then, because I would have had no way of even understanding what a missionary call might possibly have been...²⁷

²⁵ S. Adelaja, *Life and Death in the Power of the Tongue*, Kiev: Fares Publishing House 2003, 25.

²⁶ Pastor William Kumuyi is the founder and current leader of one of the most popular Nigerian Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, the Deeper Life Bible Church (Deeper Life Christian Ministry) founded in the 1970s.

²⁷ S. Adelaja, “Go to a land I will show you”, in: C.P. Wagner and J. Thompson (eds.), *Out of Africa*, California: Regal Books 2004, 37-55. See also the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All nations website: http://www.godembassy.org/en/pastor_/africa.php, consulted March 10, 2003. Hanciles, 104 describes this form of an Abrahamic commission as the Abrahamic model of migration.

In Belarus, Adelaja joined a Christian foreign students' fellowship, became part of an underground church and embarked on an active Christian ministry, which intensified with the fall of communism. As Adelaja remarked,

Survival during Communism's dictatorship demanded much wisdom, silent worship and many narrow escapes by the power of the Holy Spirit (...) The fear of the Lord kept me focused till the year 1990, when the God-ordained reformations of Mikhail Gorbachev began to take effect. For the first time, we were able to meet with Russian believers. That turned out to be the beginning of my full-time ministry...²⁸

He survived repeated clashes with KGB officials until his official deportation from Russia opened the way for a new life and ministry in Kiev, Ukraine. In November 1993 he started a Bible study group in his apartment with only 7 people. Within three months, the membership grew to 49. On September 12, 1994, he registered the body as a church with the Department of Religious Affairs, with the name, Word of Faith Bible Church. This name was later changed in 2002 to the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations reflecting the worldwide catchment area as his constituency for further expansion and mission.²⁹

Adelaja's original vision was first 'to establish a megachurch to win and minister to thousands of people from the Kiev area', and then 'send missionaries into the world, especially into China and the Arab countries. Just as the world used to know the former Soviet Union as an exporter of weapons of mass destruction, so now God wanted these nations to be exporters of life through the gospel of the kingdom of God'.³⁰ Conflicts with Ukrainian government authorities, including several attempted deportations and numerous lawsuits aimed at closing down the church, dogged the young pastor's steps.³¹ He was perceived in several quarters 'as a foreign-financed charlatan who brainwashes and hypnotizes congregants into parting with their money'.³² The government and the Eastern Orthodox Church took a critical stance against the new Embassy church. Opposition was also faced from pockets of anti-

²⁸ Adelaja, 37-55.

²⁹ See 'A New Name. Embassy of God' available at the website *The Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations*, <http://www.godembassy.org/en/embassy.php>, consulted March 10, 2003.

³⁰ Adelaja, 37-55.

³¹ Hanciles, 105.

³² F. Brown, 'Taking Kiev By Surprise', *Charisma and Christian Life* 28/11 (2003), 91.

westernizing political groups in Ukraine. However, the church has continued to wade through these obstacles and expand both numerically and geographically. At the end of 2000, the courts acquitted him of various charges in 22 lawsuits brought against the church by different government agencies, media and government officials.³³ In spite of the controversy that enveloped the Embassy, the church had a significant appeal to Ukrainians from various social and political strata of society. The church claims that political leaders are members of the church and they attend programmes regularly. In fact, Leonid Chernovetskyi, the Mayor of Kiev is believed to be one of its prominent members. The involvement of local influential figures, captains of industry, in his church will undoubtedly have visible political, economic and strategic implications for its continued visibility and growing institutionalization.

Thus, with only 7 members on February 6, 1994, the church presently claims to be one of the largest congregations in Europe with over 20,000 members, and with 15 satellite churches in the city of Kiev, 15 daughter churches in the Kiev District and 70 churches throughout the Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Belarus and Georgia. Branches have also been established in Nigeria, Germany, the Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, the USA and elsewhere. In the USA, two branches were recently established in Sacramento, California and Sarasota, Florida. On the whole, he lays claim to over 300 'daughter' churches in countries outside Ukraine.

The Embassy is an instance of an African church that is increasingly reshaping its religious geography in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere in the world. It has grown to acquire immense properties and real estate as a way of asserting and inserting herself in new geo-cultural contexts. The Embassy of God acquired between 15 and 51 hectares of land (total area: 140,000 square meters) in Kiev to erect a magnificent edifice for multi-religious purposes.³⁴ The Embassy is another example of an African church that has even proposed religious banks to 'empower God's people economically, and promote the Kingdom of God'.³⁵ Such extra-religious activities no doubt have immense

³³ See details at: http://www.godembassy.org/en/pastor_/bigraphy.php, consulted March 3, 2005.

³⁴ See full details at the church website available at: www.godembassy.org/eng/projnewbuild_e.shtm, consulted March 3, 2005.

³⁵ Cf. Christian Bank Project of the Embassy of God, www.godembassy.org/eng/projsbank_e.shtm, and the vision and plans of the Kingsway International Christian Church in Eastern London at its website, <http://www.kicc.org.uk/>, consulted August 15, 2005.

religious, social and economic import for the churches as well as for the immediate environment and communities in which they are located.³⁶ Boasting numerous ministries, including soup kitchens and drug rehabilitation centres, radio and television programmes, and other forms of media production, the Embassy is now a significant presence in Kiev.³⁷ The church seems to provide statistical evidence justifying its social relevance within the immediate society, declaring that

between 1-2 thousand people feed daily in the church's "Stephania Soup Kitchen" (almost two million people fed over the past 6 years); over 3,000 people set free from drug and alcohol addiction; providing homes for street and abandoned children (where over 2000 children have been restored to their families) (...) unswervingly implication in the transformation of all strata of society; church members involvement in schools, factories, banks and other social groups of society; thousands of mafia members have come to the Lord through the activities of the Embassy of God, the church's hot-line has counseled over 70 thousand people, of which 1,500 are now church members.³⁸

Adelaja hosts a weekly Christian TV Show and lays claim to a television ministry with coverage of over 100 million homes across Europe, Africa and Russia. He has authored numerous religious books, many of which were based on his previous sermon texts. The core of his Kiev ministry is preaching, healing and providing desperately needed services in a society that is, at best, inept at coping with rampant alcoholism, widespread poverty and several strains on families.³⁹ The socio-economic climate of the former Soviet Union following the collapse of the Iron Curtain provided a 'breathing ground' for the Embassy church and probably explains why the church has attracted a huge following from the host context. In a relative sense, poverty, social pneumonia and economic uncertainty seem to assume common denominators between Africans and Ukrainians and thus provided public appeal to new Pentecostal churches such as the Embassy. As a local pastor of the church remarks, 'Everybody who comes here has a problem. Everybody is in crisis (...) Most of them are

³⁶ Adogame, 'Contesting the Ambivalences of Modernity', 35; 'Contesting the Ambivalences of Modernity', 509.

³⁷ Hanciles, 105.

³⁸ See 'Facts and Statistics Embassy of God' available at *The Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations*, <http://www.godembassy.org/en/embassy.php>, consulted November 27, 2006.

³⁹ Brown, 90.

unchurched and desperate. They are searching for a way to cope with alcohol, drugs, a lack of money or spouses who stray'.⁴⁰ Apparently justifying the church's *raison d'être* and public relevance, Adelaja remarks:

Honored pastors! Beloved brothers and sisters! As long as our world moves, in which we live, anomalous things become normal. The devil will present norms of life farther and more graceless than before. Still 40 years back the whole world, specifically professional medicine, considered homosexuality and Lesbianism as a sickness, and it was seen as a lack in health, but in the 70's the same sick doctors started to accept it as a standard ideology and thinking. History shows that since that time the world began to run mad. "First, accept us like we are and then create laws which allow unisexual marriage". Now ideological organizations and political forces try...⁴¹

His pragmatic approach towards solving the varied existential problems of his members and visitors brings close the cosmological tradition within which Adelaja was born and nurtured. The reality of malevolent spiritual forces such as witches, demons, evil spirits, sorcerers and the ritual attitude towards neutralizing their impact can be located in this-worldly and other-worldly orientation that characterizes the African worldview. Frequent street processions such as the 'March for Jesus' were very symbolic in ridding society of demons, witches and evil spirits which members hold accountable for the ills and incipient social decadence in the society. The chanting and rendering of songs such as 'Up, Up Jesus, Down, Down Satan' during street processions in Kiev suggests how members have been religiously sensitized to engage in and embark on 'spiritual warfare' against malevolent and enigmatic spiritual powers prevalent in Ukrainian society, in this case through terrestrial processions. Deliverance and healing services, counseling sessions, crusades, night-vigils and open-air preaching are spaces in which 'spiritual battles' with the malevolent powers occur. Members and visitors patronise Adelaja seeking panacea to their varied existential problems. The fact that Adelaja weaves elements of indigenous African cosmology to appeal to the spiritual sensibilities of Ukrainians is significant against the backdrop of a context and people barely getting over the hangover of a Marxist-socialist *Weltanschauung*. It might well be that these features are not totally alien to this context but were driven aground for a long time by secular thinking that characterized the Soviet regime. However, the taking up

⁴⁰ Brown, 90.

⁴¹ See detailed text available at website *Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations*, <http://www.godembassy.org/en/index.php>, consulted November 27, 2006.

of extra-religious functions and his pragmatism towards tackling these multifarious social, spiritual, economic problems, beyond the content of his message, may have been a primary stimulus and focus of attraction. In such a church with majority membership being non-African may therefore raise the question of why and to what extent the Embassy church can be considered as an African church. Two points stand out there. First, the founder and leader is African. Second, the controversies that surrounded his immigrant status and the emphasis on his foreigner-ness are visible especially in the church's earlier years. In fact, the church is still largely considered by the public as a foreign church. The several threats and attempts at its closure and the failed deportation threats on the leader are important considerations in this respect. As hinted above, the theology of the church as partly discerned in sermons and some of their religious programmes, has a flair for African religious worldviews.

Taking Kiev by Surprise: The Transnationalization of New African Churches

The volume, scope, framework and patterns of contemporary international migration is in constant change and transformation in such a way that mirrors migration less as a single change of space and place, but rather as a complex and multidirectional movement. Earlier conceptions of immigrants and migrants as individuals uprooted from one society to settle and become incorporated into a new land are no longer very convincing. Contemporary migrant populations are largely characterized by networks, activities and life-patterns that entangle both their 'old home' and 'new home' — host societies, as well as with other host contexts. This "simultaneous embeddedness" and multiplicity of involvements in more than one society or context produces alongside a heterogeneous set of sustained transnational activities.⁴²

⁴² N. Glick-Schiller, L. Basch and C. Blanc-Szanton, 'Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration' in: Nina Glick-Schiller, et al. (eds.) *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*. New York: Annals of the New York Academy of Science 645, 1992, 1-24; Nina Glick-Schiller et al., 'From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration' in: P. Ludger, (ed.) *Transnationale Migration*. Baden-Baden: Nomos 1997, 121-140; Linda G. Basch, Nina Glick-Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, (eds.), *Nations Unbound. Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers 1994;

Transnational processes are, in themselves, not new; precedents abound in earlier trajectories of migration. However, current connections of immigrants are operating on slightly different templates, facilitated by new complex political, religious and socio-economic circumstances in a fast globalizing world. As Portes et al. note, 'Precursors of present immigrant transnationalism have existed for centuries (...) but they lack the elements of regularity, routine involvement, and critical mass characterizing contemporary examples of transnationalism...' ⁴³ As he argues, what is new is the high intensity of exchanges, the new modes of transacting business, and the multiplication of activities that require cross-border travel and contacts on a sustained basis. ⁴⁴ The technological revolution, which has facilitated travel and communication across nation borders, supports the maintenance and expansion of transnational social networks created by the migrants themselves. ⁴⁵ The process of transnationalism encompasses phenomena as diverse as import/export immigrant businesses, investments by migrants in the country of origin, sustained family links in both countries of origin and settlement, home-based religious and cultural organizations that set up branches in countries of new settlement and vice versa, as well as the mobilization of migrants by homeland political parties and social movements, or the diffusion of home-based conflicts to the migrant community and vice versa.

As we have noted elsewhere, one distinguishing feature of the recent trend as compared to previous immigration waves is the fluid processes of transnational networks, links and residencies. ⁴⁶ The transnational nature of many African churches in diaspora challenges the assumption that immigrants usually cut off ties and links with their homeland after integration into the new

P. Smith and L. Guarnizo (eds.), *Transnationalism from Below*. New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers 1998; S. Castles and M. Miller, *The Age of Migration*, New York: The Guilford Press, 3rd edition, 2003; A. Portes, et al., 'The study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an emergent research field', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2/2 (1999), 463-477; S. Vertovec and R. Cohen, (eds.), *Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism*. Cheltenham, 1999: Elgar; S. Westwood and A. Phizacklea, *Trans-nationalism and the Politics of Belonging*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

⁴³ Portes et al., 224.

⁴⁴ Portes et al., 219.

⁴⁵ B.S. Heisler, 'The Sociology of Immigration: From Assimilation to Segmented Integration, from the American Experience to the Global Arena' in C.B. Brettell and J.F. Hollifield (eds.), *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*, New York: Routledge 2000, 87.

⁴⁶ Adogame, 'Contesting the Ambivalences of Modernity', 26; 'Raising Champions, Taking Territories', 25-27.

host context. Most new African immigrant churches are rooted locally and in the land of origin, but also in that intra-communal web which links them with different places across the globe.⁴⁷ These communities are connected through various ties in the realm of religion, economy, friendship, kinship, politics and increasingly so through the virtual space of telephone cells, new media such as the Internet which have become a central feature of development and maintenance of diasporic identity.

Scholars need to pay more attention to the role of media in stimulating transnational religious activities. New African churches and religious organizations have appropriated new media technologies such as internet websites, TV and interactive technologies in the transmission of their religious ideologies, as a recruitment strategy for new clientele, but also as a way of maintaining links and contact to members and branches transnationally.⁴⁸ Although the use of media is not at all a novel feature, what is new is their deliberate effort towards making their presence known and felt on the World Wide Web. While the church web sites act as a new and relatively effective means of outreach to the larger community, most of these groups who appropriate it do so in order to also draw potential clientele. Such intentions are clearly portrayed in their introductory statements.⁴⁹ As we have argued elsewhere, the recourse by African churches in diaspora to new, alternative evangelistic strategies is intricately tied to new, global socio-cultural realities. The somewhat individualistic nature of western societies for instance has largely rendered some of the known conventional modes inept and far-less productive. Thus, the 'personal' modes of communication (i.e. door to door, street to street, marketplace and bus evangelism) is giving way systematically to more 'impersonal', 'neutral' modes (i.e. computer web sites, electronic mail, fax). The relevance and urgency that these alternative modes of communication demand in the western context, lends credence to why virtually all the web sites of these churches have been established, developed and maintained in Europe, USA or elsewhere outside Africa.⁵⁰ The Embassy boasts of a professionally built website that is rich in content and structure.⁵¹ This section contains printed materials and audio-

⁴⁷ Adogame, 'Raising Champions, Taking Territories', 25.

⁴⁸ Adogame, 'The Quest for Space, 404-406; 'African Christian Communities in Diaspora', 510.

⁴⁹ See Adogame, 'African Christian Communities in Diaspora', 510-512.

⁵⁰ Adogame, 'African Christian Communities in Diaspora', 512.

⁵¹ See the Embassy media resources on its official website available at its website *Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations*, http://media.godembassy.org/en/media/media.php?current_sub=2, consulted July 15, 2007.

visual resources screening over 1000 sermons of the Pastor and leaders of the church, over 30 books authored by the Pastor, music, video coverage of programmes as well as testimonies of members.⁵² His books encompass themes and titles such as: '*Olorunwa* (a Yoruba word literally translated as 'there is God') — Portrait of Sunday Adelaja: The Roads of Life', 'Mighty Warrior', 'Spearheading a National Transformation', 'Victorious despite the Devil', 'the Road to Greatness', 'Living Sexually Free', 'Successful Marriage Takes Work'. Although these books were originally written in English, their translations into local Ukrainian, Russian, Dutch, German, French and other languages demonstrate their local but also global impact. In fact, the website is an embodiment of the history, belief system and wide ranging activities of the church. It touches on virtually all aspects that an inquisitive observer might be looking out for. Through these mediated sources, church programmes and other religious activities that are publicised have both local and global reach. Mediated space and new media appropriation, what Appadurai describes as pentecostal mediascapes, therefore serves as a process of emplacement and a distinctive mark of public representation or global positioning within the religious map of the universe.

Diasporas are webs, and webs consist not only of fibres and ropes, but also of nodes that link them together.⁵³ Portes et al.⁵⁴ seek to turn the concept of transnationalism into a clearly defined and measurable object of research. They acknowledge that transnationalism involves individuals, their networks of social relations, their communities, and broader institutionalised structures such as local and national governments. For methodological reasons, however, they define the individual and his/her support networks as the proper unit of analysis because they believe that a study that begins with the history and activities of individuals is the most efficient way of learning about the institutional underpinnings of transnationalism and its structural effects. The increasing itinerancy of religious leaders, freelance evangelists and members between the homeland and diasporic spaces cannot be over-emphasized. While we do recognise the significance of members and their groups' networks and

⁵² See for instance its website *Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations*, http://www.godembassy.org/en/pastor_/books.php, and http://www.godembassy.org/en/pastor_/bigraphy.php, consulted July 19, 2007.

⁵³ D. Haller, 'Transcending Locality: The Diaspora Network of Sephardic Jews in the Western Mediterranean', *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 9/1 (2001), 7.

⁵⁴ Portes et al.

mobility, we limit our focus in this paper only to the complex mobility of the leader, Sunday Adelaja, as an indication of the transnational tendencies of this new brand of African Christianity.

On the other hand, the expansionist tendency of new African diasporic churches beyond their immediate context and most importantly back to their original homelands, we would argue, demonstrates a kind of 'spiritual' remittance mechanism. The discourse on what constitutes remittances sent by immigrants to their home countries should therefore go beyond financial and material remittances that limits it to cash, money flows. The table below shows the itinerary of Pastor Sunday Adelaja as documented on the official website of the Embassy church. We have isolated here a three-year travel schedule — 2005, 2007 and 2008 as a case in point.

Table 1: Pastor Sunday Adelaja's (EBKGC) Itinerary 2005, 2007 and 2008⁵⁵

Month	2005	2007	2008
January		Jan 10-13: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia Jan 13-19: Paradise, South Australia	Jan 28-29 Orlanda, Florida, USA Jan 29-31 Atlanta, Georgia, USA at Mount Paran Church
February	Feb 11-12 Kharkov, Ukraine Feb 22-26 Singapore Asia Oceania Prayer Convocation 2005	Feb 9-10: Reinchenbach, Germany Feb 16-17: Donetsk, Ukraine Feb 19-23: Singapore Feb 23 - March 1: Jakarta, Indonesia	
March	Mar. 2 Indonesia Mar. 9-12 Berea, Holland. National Leaders Conference Berea the Hague 2005 Mar. 14 Amsterdam, Holland Sunday Service	Mar. 16-17: Roskilde, Denmark	Mar. 11-14 Jerusalem, Israel

⁵⁵ Culled from the website *Pastor Sunday Adelaja Materials*, <http://www.pastorsunday.com/pages.php?id=4> and *Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations*, http://www.godem-bassy.org/en/pastor_/timetable.php, both last consulted January 22, 2008.

Table 1: (*cont.*)

Month	2005	2007	2008
April	Apr. 5-8 Kyiv, Ukraine. Samuel's Mountain Gate Convocation April 4-10 Kyiv, Ukraine. ICCL Fellows Program Apr. 19 Billion Soul Campaign Tour, North America Apr. 20-25 Bad Gandersheim, Germany. Men Rooted in Christ Conference	Apr. 13-14: Jamaica, New York, USA Apr. 15: Fort Myers, Florida, USA Apr. 19-21: Washington DC, USA Apr. 23-25: Rochester, New York April 26-27: Philadelphia, USA April 30-May 2: Milan, Italy	Apr. 10-14 Scotland Apr. 21-27 Soweto, South Africa
May	May 5 Orlando, Florida, USA 5 Fold Gathering May 6-8 London, England Pastors and Leadership Conf. May 11, Nigeria 2005 May 25-28 Germany New Gate European Convocation With Jobst Bittner	May 11-12: Jamaica, New York, USA May 13-14: USA May 15-24: Mexico	May 5-8 Midland, Australia
June	June 10-12 Karaganda, Kazakhstan Leadership Conference June 14-17 Denver, Colorado, USA Pastoring Without Tears Conference June 17-19 Denver, Colorado, USA 2005 Convention June 21 Billion Soul Campaign Tour North America June 25-26 Berlin, Germany. Worship Service	June 7-10: Frankfurt, Germany June 17-19: Decatur, Alabama, USA June 20-21: Blountville, Tennessee, USA	June 12-15 Atlanta, USA June 24-26 Cairo, Egypt
July	July 6-9 Riga, Latvia July 10-16 Bergen, Norway Summer Festival 2005 July 17-21 Colorado, USA. Life-Giving Leadership Conference — Sunday Service	July 12-13: Houston, Texas, USA July 15-17: DFW, TX, USA July 17-19: London, England	
August	August 11-13 Warsaw, Poland August 26-28 Helsinki, Finland	August 16-20: Atlanta, Georgia August 21-22: Bridgeport, Connecticut, USA August 23-25: Atlanta, Georgia August 26-28: Tampa, Florida, USA	August 12-14 St. Petersburg, Russia

Table 1: (*cont.*)

Month	2005	2007	2008
September	Sept. 7-10 Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada Regional Apostolic Conference Sept. 11-13 Hamilton, Ontario, Canada Sept. 24-25 Kharkov, Ukraine Embassy of God: Wall Church Anniversary	Sept. 4-6: Sao Paulo, Brazil Sept. 7-9: Brazil Sept. 10-13: Solo, Indonesia Sept. 15-17: Israel, Jerusalem	Sept. 16-26 Japan
October	Oct. 4 Billion Soul Campaign Tour, North America Oct. 11-13 Kingston, Jamaica Oct. 14-16 Sacramento, California Oct. 17-19 Altoona, Pennsylvania Oct. 20-21 New York, New York Oct. 22-30 Abuja, Nigeria. The Outpouring 2005 Oct. 30 Belaya Tserkov, Ukraine Embassy of God's 3rd Anniversary	Oct. 18-21: Lagos, Nigeria	October 23-25 Madras, India
November	Nov. 8 Billion Soul Campaign Tour, North America Nov. 12-13 Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. Church's 9th Anniversary Nov. 14-20 Germany. Pastors & Leaders Conference	Nov. 11-13: Oklahoma City, OK Tulsa, OK DFW, TX, USA Nov. 23-26: Gisborne, New Zealand	
December			

The travel schedule of Sunday Adelaja portrays him as a 'world class traveler' with frequent trips to virtually all continents of the world. Adelaja engages in cross-continental travel virtually every month, sometimes in multiple directions. The figures above reveal his travel schedule of 30 months out of the total 36 months between the years 2005, 2007 and 2008. The table shows the month of December is the only travel-free month across the three-year period. The most frequented is perhaps North America with several visits to a host of US states and cities, but Canada as well. The table also shows frequent visits within European and Scandinavian countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, Poland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland and Norway. There were other visits to Asia (India, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan), Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Brazil, Israel, and to African countries such as Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt. Nevertheless, the significance of these frequent travels does not simply lie in the number of cities or countries visited but more on the motive of the travels and the activities that took place during

these travels. Space does not permit an elaborate analysis of the various events indicated in the table above, but suffice it to say that the nature of the events further eulogizes both their transnational dimension and the socio-religious, cultural, political and economic implications in local-global contexts.

The import of local and global networks among African churches in both home and host contexts cannot be over-emphasized. Such networks are assuming increasing significance for new African migrants. The range and nature of ties include new ecumenical affiliations, pastoral exchanges between Africa, Europe and the US, special events and conferences, prayer networks, internet sites, international ministries, publications, audio/video, and tele-evangelism. The link 'flow' is multi-directional involving both sending and receiving links, global and local. The proliferation of social ties and relationships among new African migrants, and between migrant churches, host churches and their home base has implications that need to be contextually understood. Some of these groups frequently organize programmes which are local in nature but which have a global focus that links the local church with other churches globally. The Embassy organizes annual local events and programmes that bring together religious leaders and participants from various countries and continents. Such programmes have significant local, global and transnational implications. Some programmes even have social and political implications. Adelaja mobilized his members and a cross-section of the public and was involved in the Orange revolution for democracy in Ukraine. The political import of his church's involvement in the orange demonstration cannot be over-emphasized. So also was the organized demonstration to protest the refusal to allocate land for the building of his church. The fact that the local government finally bowed to public pressure in support of Adelaja demonstrates an instance of the politics of religious space emplacement in Ukraine.

Out of Africa: Beyond the Rhetoric of Reverse Mission

A section of the Embassy's self-documented history captioned 'Out of Africa'⁵⁶ best eulogizes new dynamics of religious expansion and proliferation of new African immigrant religiosity globally. The transnational nature of the church also demonstrates the interconnection and interdependence between religious

⁵⁶ See Chapter Two of the history of the Embassy 'Out of Africa: Go to a Land that I will Show you', available at website *Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations*, http://www.godembassy.org/en/pastor_/africa.php, consulted August 18, 2004.

practice in the communities of migrants' homelands and in the diasporas. Many African churches in the homeland are now consciously engaged in sending missionaries to evangelize Europe, the USA and other parts of the globe. Many of the African missionaries are commissioned by their home churches and provided with financial and material resources. African immigrants in Europe such as Sunday Adelaja have also founded churches in the new context. While this 'reverse-mission' initiative cannot be claimed to be a peculiar feature of African Christian movements, they are nevertheless engaged in transmitting their religious traditions beyond their immediate geo-ethnic contexts. This reverse-mission dynamics can be better analyzed as an evolving dimension of the transnational process. To this new religious dynamics we shall now turn.

The conscious missionary strategy by mother churches in Africa of evangelizing the diaspora and the West is a relatively recent one.⁵⁷ Migration and diaspora has been key aspects to their responses to mission in Europe, North America and elsewhere. The enterprise was aimed at re-evangelizing Europe and North America in particular, the former heartlands of Christianity and vanguards of missionary movements from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The 'reverse mission process' is of significant religious, socio-political and missiological import as the non-Western world, particularly Africa, Asia, and Latin America, were at the receiving end of Catholic and Protestant missions as mission fields till the late twentieth century. In concrete terms, the traditional 'missions fields' have now become the mission bases of renewed efforts to re-evangelize the fast secularizing societies of Europe and North America.⁵⁸ The emergence of indigenous Christian movements in the non-Western world in the late 19th century provides the background to the reverse direction of missions.

The 'reverse flow' initiative that entails sending African missionaries abroad came partly as a backdrop of the moratorium by the Lutheran World Foundation. The moratorium call was designed among other things to awaken the Third World peoples to their responsibility, creating new goals and of formulating a viable evangelical strategy towards Europe.⁵⁹ In 1971, the Western

⁵⁷ Adogame, 'The Quest for Space', 406-407; 'Contesting the Ambivalences of Modernity'; 'Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare', 497-498; 'African Christian Communities in Diaspora'; 'Raising Champions, Taking Territories'.

⁵⁸ M. Ojo, 'Reverse mission', *Encyclopaedia of Missions and Missionaries*, forthcoming 2007.

⁵⁹ See O.U Kalu, 'Church, mission and moratorium', in: O.U Kalu (ed.) *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, London and New York: Longman 1980, 365-374.

missions circle was stunned when Rev. John Gatu, a leader of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa, called for a moratorium on Christian missions from the Western world to the Third World. This call which took a revolutionary stance generated heated conversation, rebuttals and criticisms from various quarters, particularly from the Western world. Several Third World Christian leaders supported this suggestion because they believed that it would break the circle of dependency on the Western churches and create room for self-development. In actual fact, it produced a new consciousness about dependence and strategies for self-reliance that has challenged definitions of mission but also altered the uni-directionality of missions that characterized earlier conceptions.

Legacies of the moratorium discourse eulogized by Gatu and his contemporaries are still fresh and resilient within world mission circles.⁶⁰ In fact, Gatu has remained very consistent, positive and vehement about the urgency for self-sufficiency and self-reliance of the church in Africa. He seemed not to have been deterred by criticisms and any pretensions when he echoed his earlier call, two and half decades later, at a consultation on self-reliance of the churches in Africa at Limuru, Kenya in May 1996. As he enthused with a dint of determinism:

Unless African church leadership accept(s) the challenge of self-reliance in order to undo the yoke of dependence and are able to set examples in training, personal life, trusting one another regardless of the devils of ethnicity that seem to plague not only Africa but the world today, the Church in Africa will remain poor, weak and unable to engage in her missionary calling to go onto the world.⁶¹

Although the moratorium failed to produce a formal radical and systemic halt of the influx of Western missionaries and mission resources to Africa, it nevertheless raised a question mark that resulted in self-reflexivity and structural adjustment by Western missionaries and on their mission resources. It served as an eye-opener for many about the new changing dynamics of mission and religious expansion in which Africans were not only looking inward for self-reliance, but outwardly with a mission mandate to evangelize what they now refer as 'the dark continent of Europe', 'the prodigal continent' or 'the dead West'. This empowerment process of the Third World churches brought significant changes in mission practices as issues of co-operation and partnership were

⁶⁰ See for instance the discourse on dependence and self-reliance at the World Missions Associate official website, <http://www.wmausa.org/98600.ihtml>, consulted October 10, 2007.

⁶¹ See J. Gatu, 'Rationale for Self-Reliance' at World Missions Associate website, <http://www.wmausa.org/page.aspx?id=83845>, consulted October 10, 2007.

promoted as new mission strategies at the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland in July 1974 and in subsequent congresses. Third World Christians participated in these congresses and further held continental and regional conferences, which provided those challenges and global opportunities.

In the early 1980s, Tanzanian Lutheran pastors were sponsored to serve in various parishes in Germany. The reverse-mission agenda is becoming a very popular feature among new African churches, with pastors and missionaries commissioned to head already existing branches or establish new ones in diaspora. The growth of missionary endeavors from Africa and other parts of the non-Western world has gained momentum in the 1990s, in a way that challenges Christianity in the West but also world Christianity. African groups, clergy and laity existing within host, foreign churches now further characterize the religious mosaic of the African diaspora. Examples include the African Christian Church, Hamburg under the *Nordelbian Kirche* in Germany, African groups within the American and European mainstream churches such as the Episcopal, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran and Catholic. There are growing numbers of Nigerian Roman Catholic and Anglican priests in the USA, Tanzanian Lutheran and Ghanaian Methodist priests in Germany, South African Presbyterians in Scotland. In some cases, African priests are employed in and by host European churches, although they have African congregations as their primary constituency. This exportation of clergy and missionaries on 'reverse-mission' from Africa to the diaspora demonstrates the stature of Africa as an emerging global theatre of Christianity. Another growing feature within the African religious diaspora is the proliferation of para-churches, supportive or inter-denominational ministries. Freelance evangelists and short-term missionaries from Africa embark on frequent visits to a network of churches overseas. Somewhat loose, flexible and non-formalized organizational hierarchies and administrative structures characterize such ministries, associated with Abubakar Bako and Omo Okpai. Such freelancing is carried out within and between African and other Pentecostal/charismatic church circles under the rubric of evangelism and intra-religious networks.

By the 1990s, many churches had progressed to define their missions as witnessing communities to the Western churches and societies, which were waning numerically and spiritually. In the closing decade of the 20th century, reverse missions became more recognized and gradually gained ascendancy due to economic decline and political conflicts, which intensified migration of Africans, Asians and Latin Americans to the West. Confronted by the secularization of the Western society and the decline of church attendance and

public piety, these migrants took up a revivalist agenda. At the same time, these immigrant Christians looked at the Western churches as being in a state of apostasy, and in a spiritual wilderness that needed re-evangelization. As Ojo⁶² highlights, the founding of the Third World Missions Association (TWMA), in Portland, Oregon, USA, in May 1989 as a forum for mission-sending agencies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to enhance their capacities to undertake extensive missionary endeavors brought in an institutional perspective and transformed non-Western world missions into a global force in world Christianity. In fact, the closure of some Arab countries to western missionaries and the acceptance and success of African and Asian missionaries working among Arabs also proved quite significant in this process of reverse missions. Likewise, the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, a global effort of world evangelization, directed by Third World Christian leaders provided additional involvement and networking for evangelization and cross-cultural missions.

By the mid-1990s, non-Western churches were beginning to achieve some degree of success in their missionary efforts, though they were largely using non-professional missionaries. Many African churches have been evangelizing among whites and non-African immigrants since mid-1980s. While migration continued to provide missionary mobilization, African churches were able to realize their strength within world Christianity, and perceive their missionary activities in global perspectives. In this way, Ojo contends, they moved from the periphery to the centre once dominated by Western missions. For the Western churches, reverse mission brought a major shift in mission understanding, and provided better sensibilities to, and appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of Christianity in the 20th century. Missions changed to become multi-lateral rather than unilateral, itinerant missionaries grew, while missions moved from cultural transplantation to contextualization. This reverse trend in missions offered the old heartlands of Christianity a model for renewal, and called for a structural reform of the Church to grapple with the challenges of migration.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated, with the example of the Embassy Church, the changing dynamics of new African Christianity, the expanding demography

⁶² Ojo, 'Reverse mission'.

of African Christian immigrant communities and how they are contributing to the religious diversification of the diasporic context, in this case Eastern Europe. We have explored the contextual factors that shape its emergence and development in Kiev, but also how its essentially pragmatic approach towards the existential life problems faced by members and his admirers in the immediate society have attracted a huge clientele of membership. We demonstrated an instance of religious transnationalization of new African churches by focusing on the increasing mobility and itinerancy of Sunday Adelaja between the local context of Ukraine, several countries in Europe, North America and also in Africa. The Embassy's conscious appropriation of new media technologies and the growing reverse-mission dynamics were analyzed as new, evolving dimension of the transnational process. The Embassy may continue to serve as a spectacle of curiosity and speculation to scholars and the public as it continues to undergo processes of institutionalization within local and global contexts. Nevertheless, it does serve to point our attention to the shifting contours of the centre of gravity of Christianity but also to the systematic diversification and pluralization of the European religious landscape. These developments evoke new ways of conceptualizing and mapping world Christianity.

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Appendix 1

The literature on African immigrant religions in Europe and North America is growing steadily. See for instance: G. ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press 1998; G. ter Haar (ed.), *Strangers and Sojourners: Religious Communities in the Diaspora*, Leuven: Peeters 1998; A. Adogame and C. Weisskoppel (eds.), *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies 2005; J. K. Olupona, and R. Gemignani, (eds.), *African Immigrant Religions in America*, New York: New York University Press 2007; D.K. Nelson, *Mission and Migration: Fifty-Two African and Asian Congregations in Minnesota*, Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press 2007; B. Simon, *Afrikanische Kirchen in Deutschland*, Frankfurt: Lembeck 2003; R. Jach, *Migration, Religion und Raum: Ghanaische Kirchen in Accra, Kumasi und Hamburg in Prozessen von Kontinuität und Kulturwandel*, Hamburg: Lit Verlag 2005; H. Harris, *Yoruba in Diaspora: An African Church in London*, London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2006; Several journal articles and book chapters on the phenomenon and related topics include for instance Afe Adogame, 'A Home Away from Home: The Proliferation of Celestial Church of Christ in Diaspora — Europe', *Exchange* 27/2 (1998), 141-160; 'The Quest for Space in the Global Religious Marketplace: African Religions in Europe', *International Review of Mission* 89/354 (2000), 400-409; 'Traversing Local-Global Religious Terrain: African New Religious Movements in Europe', *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 10 (2002), 33-49; 'Engaged in the task of "Cleansing" the World: Aladura Churches in 20th Century Europe', in K. Koschorke (ed.) *Transcontinental Links in the History of Non-Western Christianity*, volume 6, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 2002, 73-86; 'Betwixt Identity and Security: African New Religious Movements and the Politics of Religious Networking in Europe', *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 7/2 (2003), 24-41; 'Contesting the Ambivalences of Modernity in a Global Context: The Redeemed Christian Church of God, North America', *Studies in World Christianity*, 10/1 (2004), 25-48; 'Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare: The Public Face of Aladura in Diaspora', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34/4, (2004), 493-522; 'To be or not to be? Politics of Belonging and African Christian Communities in Germany' in: Adogame and Cordula Weisskoppel (eds.), *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, Bayreuth African Studies, Bayreuth: Universität Bayreuth 2005, 95-112; 'African Christian Communities in Diaspora', in: O.U. Kalu (ed.) *African Christianity: An African Story*, Pretoria: Department of Church History, University of Pretoria 2005, 494-514; 'African Instituted Churches in Europe. Continuity and Transformation', in: K. Koschorke (ed.) *African Identities and World Christianity in the Twentieth Century*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005, 225-244; Afe Adogame and Ezra Chitando, 'Moving among those moved by the Spirit: Conducting Fieldwork within the New African Religious Diaspora', *Fieldwork in Religion*, 1/3 (2005), 253-270; Afe Adogame, 'Raising Champions, Taking Territories: African Churches and the Mapping of New Religious Landscapes in Diaspora', in: T.L. Trost, (ed.) *The African Diaspora and the Study of Religion*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007, 17-34; E. Akyeampong, 'Africans in the Diaspora: The Diaspora and Africa', *African Affairs* 99 (2000), 183-215; R. Van Dijk, 'From camp to encompassment: discourses of transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 27/2 (1997), 135-169; 'Negotiating Marriage: Questions of Morality and Legitimacy in the Ghanaian

Pentecostal Diaspora', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34/4 (2004), 438-467; M. Salzbrunn, 'The Occupation of Public Space through Religious and Political Events: How Senegalese Migrants became a part of Harlem, New York', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34/4 (2004), 468-492; J. Hanciles, 'Beyond Christendom: African Migration and Transformations in Global Christianity', *Studies in World Christianity* 10/1 (2004), 93-113.